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## Builders, Architects Go Green

by Blanche Evans

High energy prices from electricity to gasoline are causing shifts in the way people prioritize home improvement projects, according to a new report by the American Institute of Architects, but that won't do homeowners much good until builders and contractors know the latest techniques in building green. Just in time, the Sunbelt Builders Show in Grapevine, Texas, is showcasing a green home as part of its builder education focus.

The AIA's Home Design Trend Survey for the second quarter of 2007 found that a growing number of homeowners are concerned with utility costs, which has led to an increase in demand for energy efficient solutions from the home improvement sector.

That's also increasing the popularity of home offices, as consumers face longer and more expensive commutes. For the third straight year, home offices are the most popular special function room. Addressing specific design issues, Louis B. Smith, AIA, chair of the AIA Small Projects Practitioners committee said, "Homeowners are looking for more than just a desk in a bedroom. They are looking for additional acoustic privacy, better natural lighting and even a separate entry for clients. An architect's design can help create the proper relationship between the office and the home, as well as ensure a productive environment that allows for work to be accomplished comfortably and efficiently."

A recent AIA poll found that 91 percent of registered voters said they would be willing to pay \$5,000 more for a house that would use less energy and/or protect the Earth's resources.

That money would have to go a long way, because builders are looking at adding a host of energy-efficient solutions.

"As the environment and utility prices become more scrutinized, homeowners are demanding more energy efficient products and sustainable designs," said AIA Chief Economist, Kermit Baker, PhD, Hon. AIA. "Structural insulation panels, geothermal heating/cooling systems, tankless water heaters and green flooring products such as bamboo and cork are all in high consumer demand."

Builders are looking at green solutions, too. As part of its "green" building education focus, the Sunbelt Builders Show September 27-29, 2007 in Grapevine, Texas, will feature demonstrations of the Bannister High Performance House at 424 Ball Street, also in Grapevine, as a showcase for green building technology and practice.



Located just a few blocks from historic Main Street in Grapevine, the Bannister House is a joint project of the Department of Energy's *Building America* program and the Building Science Consortium. The home also is certified by the U.S. Green Building Council and the Green Built North Texas program of the Home Builders Association of

Greater Dallas.

Award-winning architect William Peck of William Peck & Associates and builder Chris Miles of Green Craft Builders LLC partnered to build the Bannister High Performance House, which is intended to represent an affordable and environmentally-friendly home. The L-shaped Texas-prairie design has 2,385 square feet of living space, 1,062 square feet of upstairs space ready for finish out, 1,100-square-feet of front and rear porches, and a 936-square-foot three-car garage with 1,160 square feet of upstairs space and storage.

Low-maintenance and barrier-free, the Bannister House features 105-year-old reclaimed wood flooring from the old Cotton Exchange building in Galveston, and a system that produces its own water from a 10,000-gallon cistern. A 5,000-square-foot roof area collects rain water and for every inch of rain, allowing the home to capture 3,000 gallons of water for sustainable use in showering, washing clothes and irrigation.

Despite its size, officials estimate that an average cost of \$75 per month will heat and cool the home thanks to its use of solar orientation, a ventilated radiant-barrier roof system, careful air-infiltration control, spray-foam insulation and advanced framing construction.

High-performance technical strategies used in the house include an air-sealed attic; a 16-seer, variable-speed, dual-fuel heat pump; a light exterior color; enhanced natural ventilation; and solar-water heating.

With 80 percent of existing homes built before 1980, there's a lot of green remodeling to be done, but the good news is that homes going forward can have many energy-saving technologies to help homeowners with affordability and sustainability.

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